

2017

Utah State Courts

Annual Report

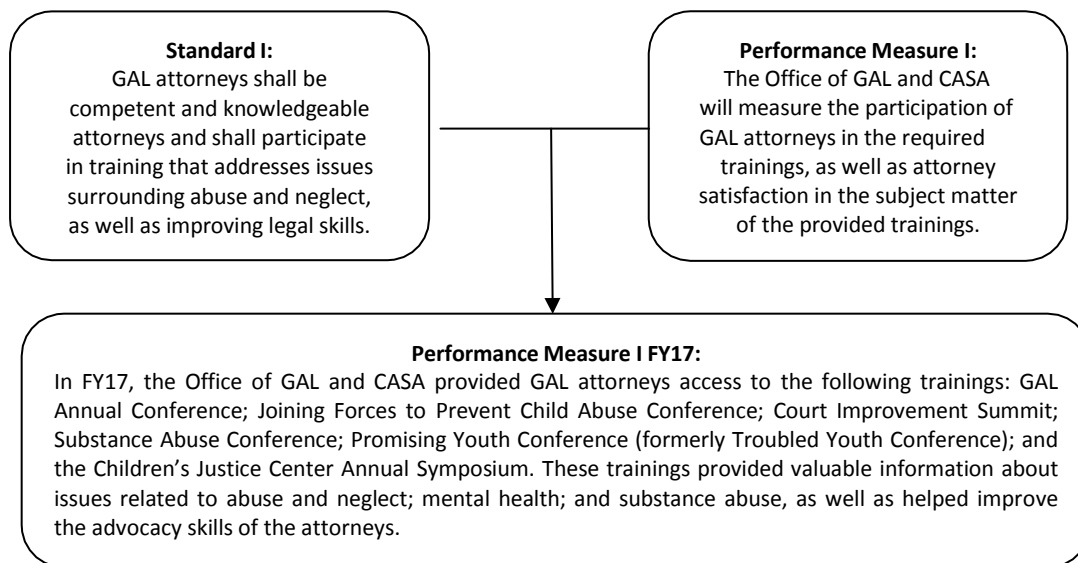
UTAH OFFICE OF GUARDIAN AD LITEM AND CASA

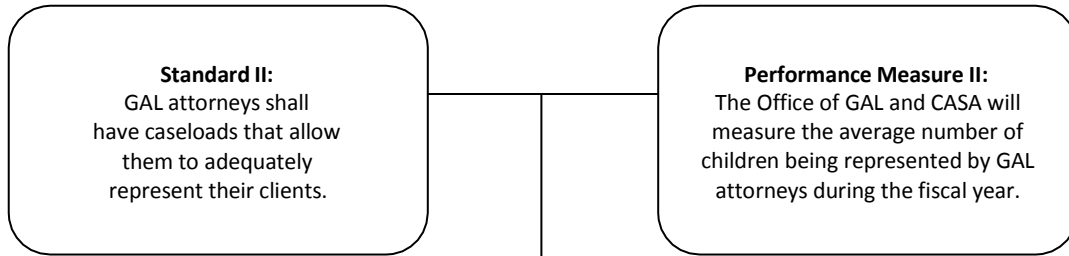
OFFICE OF GUARDIAN AD LITEM AND CASA

The work of a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) attorney carries with it a tremendous responsibility. It is their job to stand in the shoes of the child and zealously advocate for the children represented by the Office of GAL and CASA. GAL attorneys are committed and well trained, and as such, are an asset to the State of Utah.

In FY2013, the Office of GAL and CASA was asked to develop performance measures and to report on those measures annually to the Executive Offices and Criminal Justice Subcommittee. In FY2014, the Office of GAL and CASA developed these Standards and Performance Measures and they were approved by the Executive Offices and Criminal Justice Subcommittee. The approved Standards and Performance Measures, as well as supporting FY2017 data, are listed below.

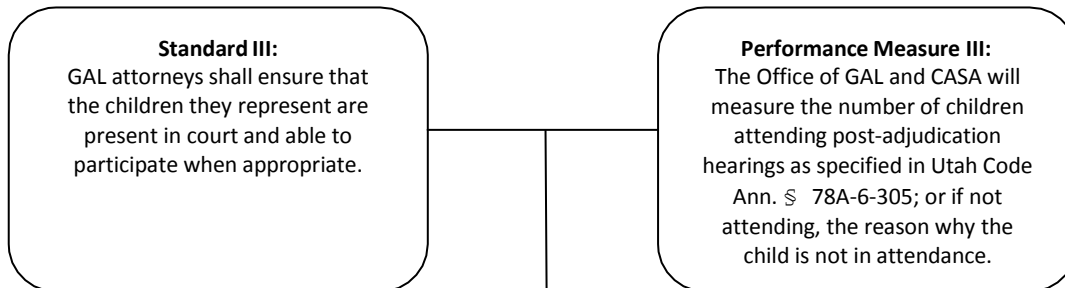
STANDARDS & PERFORMANCE MEASURES





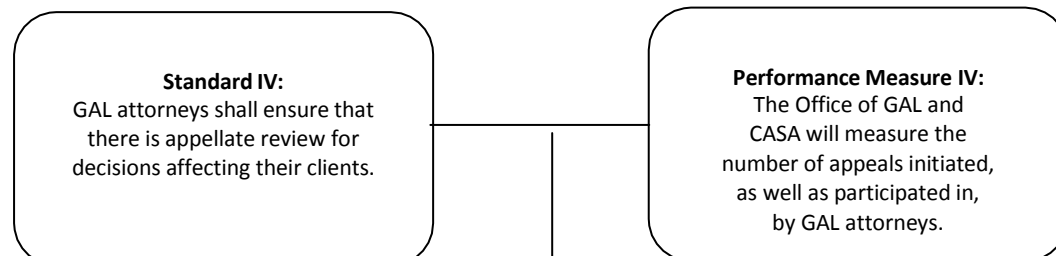
Performance Measure II FY17:

In FY17, GAL attorneys had on average 110 children on their caseloads at any given time.*This number is decreasing due in part to authorization by the legislature to reallocate resources within the Office of GAL and CASA. In FY17 the Office added two full time GAL attorneys to help with increasing caseloads.



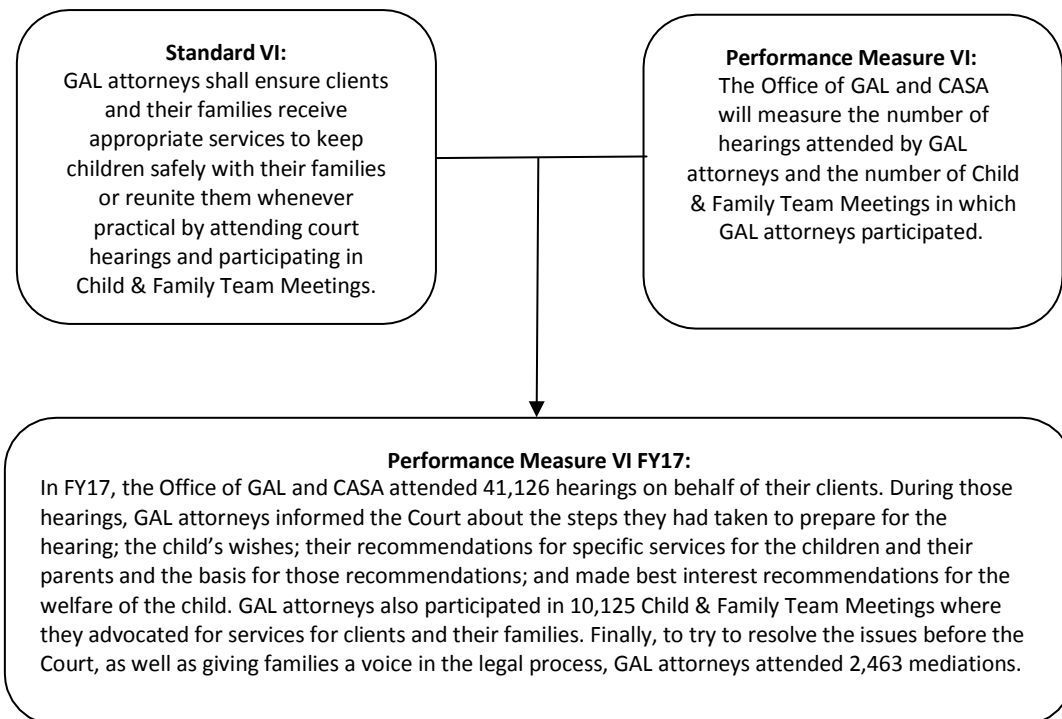
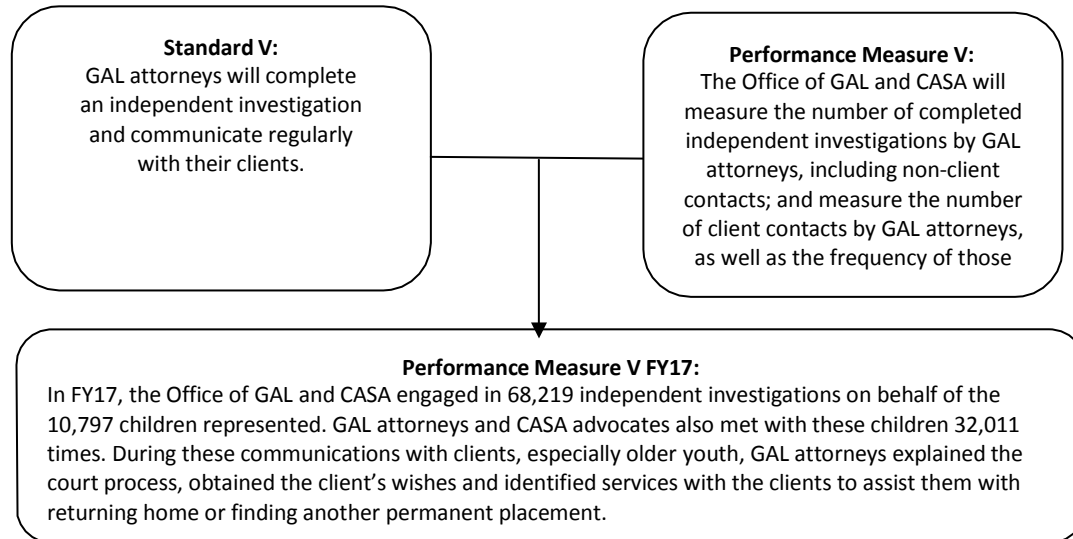
Performance Measure III FY17:

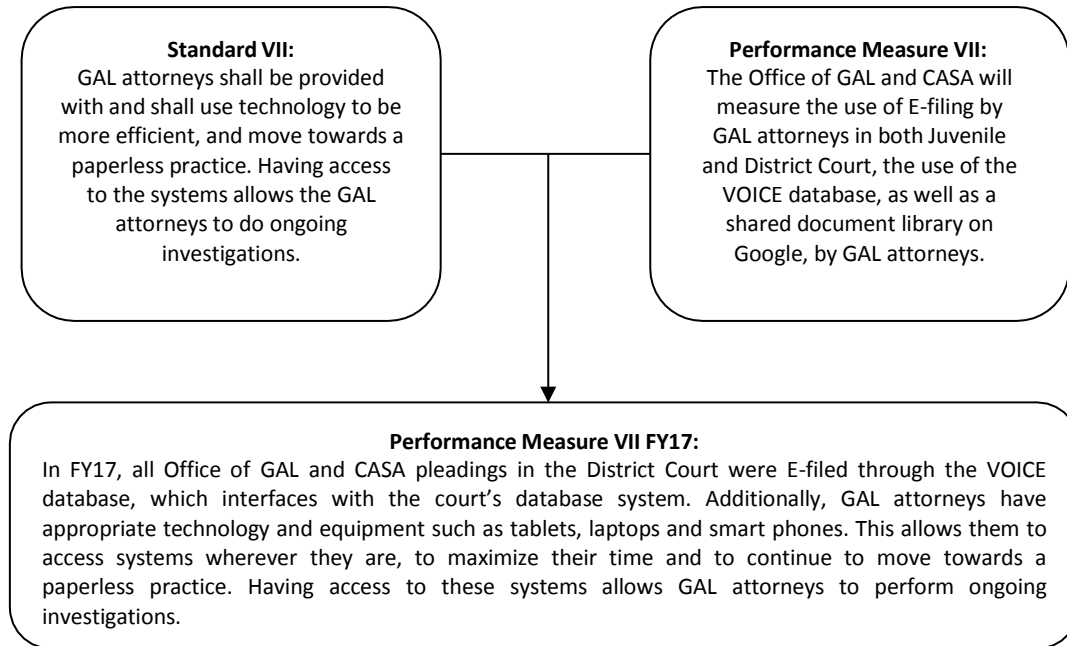
In FY17, more than 50% of children attended and participated in their court hearings. The most common reasons for children not attending their court hearing is that it was impractical for the child to attend, or it was detrimental for the child to attend. The Office of GAL and CASA continues to work with the courts and community partners to increase the presence of their clients in court, especially older youth.



Performance Measure IV FY17:

In FY17, the Office of GAL and CASA participated in 109 appeals on behalf of their clients. The Office also staffed many other cases to determine the efficacy of an appeal.





PRIVATE GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

In FY17, the Private Guardian ad Litem (PGAL) program continued to expand. There are currently 105 private attorneys who have accepted over 259 cases this past year, including over 27 pro bono cases. Dixie Jackson, the PGAL Coordinator, continues to support these private attorneys by responding to questions, providing guidance and attending hearings when necessary. Also, the Best Practice Guidelines were expanded significantly, in the form of a Private Guardian ad Litem Manual for the PGAL attorneys to be better equipped to handle these difficult cases.

The PGAL program continues to maintain its website monthly to update the list of available PGAL attorneys as well as the collection of pleadings that attorneys can use and modify. It provides a Newsletter each month with information relevant to the role of the PGAL attorney. Finally, to assist the PGAL attorneys comply with CJA R4-906, the Office of the GAL and CASA hosts sessions of Continuing Legal Education throughout the state.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE PROGRAM

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program is a valued resource for the Office of GAL and CASA. During FY17, 756 advocates served 1,255 children and donated 29,804 hours. Advocates are appointed pursuant to U.C.A. § 78A-6-902, subsection (4) (a) that states:

“An attorney guardian ad litem may use trained volunteers, in accordance with U.C.A. § 67-20-1 et seq...to assist in investigation and preparation of information regarding the cases of individual minors before the court.”

CASA's are assigned to an individual case and gather information for GAL attorneys by visiting consistently with child clients, attending Child & Family Team Meetings and court hearings, and tracking the child's progress in school. In addition, these advocates ensure that the child is receiving needed services and is in a safe, nurturing environment by monitoring court orders and reporting to the GAL attorney.

CASA's are carefully screened; they receive a background check and are provided with 32 hours of pre-service training and 12 hours of annual in-service training. Research conducted by the National CASA Association has found that children with CASA's do better in school, spend less time in foster care, and are less likely to re-enter the foster care system. This is due to the CASA being an additional safe, consistent and responsible adult present in their lives.

UTAH'S FRIENDS OF CASA

Utah's Friends of CASA is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that supports the CASA program by providing supplemental funding for volunteer recruitment, training and retention. This past year, the Utah's Friends of CASA Board assisted in funding participation at the National CASA Conference for the CASA Program Administrator and new CASA Coordinators.



Standing in the Shoes of the Child



GAL PERFORMANCE MEASURE	2015	2016	2017
1. GAL Participation in and satisfaction with required trainings	100%	100%	100%
2. Average number of children being represented by GAL attorneys	131	140	110
3. Number of children attending post-adjudication hearings as specified in UCA §78A-6-305	50%	50%	50%
4. Number of appeals initiated and/or participated in by GAL Office	102	105	109
5. Independent investigations:			
Total activities	54,034	60,397	68,219
Children represented	10,824	10,282**	10,797
Meetings with child client	29,461	33,978	32,011
6. Representation in and out of court:			
Number of Hearings attended	36,109	36,968	41,126
Number of Mediations attended	2,072	2,168	2,463
Number of Child & Family Team Meetings attended	7,562	8,419	10,125
7. GAL Attorneys shall use technology to be more efficient and move towards a paperless practice	100%	100%	100%
Private GAL Program:			
PGAL Attorneys	139	143	105
PGAL Cases	208	246	259
PGAL Pro Bono Cases	13	20	27
Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA):			
Volunteers	776	756	678
Children served	1,274	1,299	1,255
Hours donated	37,264	29,114	29,804

* Since Fall 2017, the average caseload for attorneys in the Third District offices (Salt Lake City and West Jordan) is 154, with the highest caseload of 194. Due to this increase, funding has been earmarked to add an additional attorney for the District.

** Due to a data collection error, this number was incorrect in the FY2016 report.

